

BLACK BELT®

World's Leading Magazine of Martial Arts

June 2009

The Ultimate Throw



Photo by Gary Wagstaff

Click here to watch Gokor's uchimata in the final on [YouTube #1](#) & [YouTube #2](#)

Technique Fightbook

by Edward Pollard, Black Belt's Managing Editor

When Gokor Chivichyan walked into the United States Judo Association's and United States Judo Federation's [2008 Winter Nationals®](#) held La Verne, California last December, he was dutifully playing the part of the sensei. He'd brought a number of his best grapplers--including Roman Mitichyan, the judoka who insisted he was able to continue competing on Spike TV's The Ultimate Fighter despite having suffered a broken arm.

Not long after arriving, Chivichyan was confronted by Gary Goltz, the event's creator and host who also serves as COO of the USJA and Head Sensei of [Goltz Judo](#) in Claremont. Goltz's mission was to convince the Armenian expat to enter the master's blackbelt division.

"I'm not here for the tournament," Chivichyan told Goltz. "I'm here because my students are competing." Goltz countered that if Chivichyan entered, he'd make a lot of spectators happy. "Listen," Chivichyan said, "I'm 45 years old and retired. You want me to go up against world-class guys? They will kick my butt!"

Perhaps betraying the fact that he was beginning to entertain the prospect, the former judo and sambo champ then said he didn't have his gi with him. Goltz offered to provide him with whatever he needed. "I said I'd remove any barriers such as pre-registration, weigh-in, fees, and so on," Goltz said.

Before the Black Belt Hall of Fame member knew it, the loudspeaker announced that he'd be fighting. "I'd called the pooling room and told my guy to add him," Goltz said. "As a judo advocate, I knew what it would mean to get Gokor out there." As he'd predicted, a wave of supporters came to encourage Chivichyan and express their excitement.

"I was too embarrassed to back out after that," Chivichyan said. "They gave me a gi and got me ready to go. The problem was that I didn't have enough time to warm up."

His fears proved to be unfounded as he faced his first opponents. "In judo, when you pick them up and throw them to the floor perfectly, the fight is considered over," Chivichyan said. "I didn't play too much on the ground. I started to, but those guys knew my style. I had to come up with something else.

Judo rules don't give you much time on the ground, so I decided to save my energy and follow another strategy. All the guys were very good, but I was determined to finish everybody before I got tired because I wasn't in shape. I thought I'd be lucky to get to the final."

As the tournament progressed, he almost didn't make it. Chivichyan defeated a man named Gary Butts an officer for the Los Angeles Police and West Coast National Training Center Judo Coach in an early match. He found himself facing the same opponent again at the next stage of the competition, but Chivichyan pulled a groin muscle and was forced to forfeit because he asked for medical attention.

"I couldn't even move," he said. "The doctors told me that ignoring it would only make the damage worse. I said; it's already damaged. What does it matter if there's more I'm going to continue?"

In the final, Chivichyan was once again pitted against Butts, because of the tournament's double-elimination format.

The man immediately sensed Chivichyan's weakness. "He started trying to sweep the leg that was hurting," Chivichyan said. "I thought I should be smarter, so I threw him."

The throw, an uchimata (inner thigh sweep), was later called the best judo technique of 2008, Chivichyan said. It won him the match, but he was sidelined for several weeks because of the pulled muscle. "It was swollen so much that I couldn't move," he said.

"My whole leg was purple from top to bottom. I didn't know whether to be happy that I competed and won or unhappy because I was hurting."

Despite the injury, Chivichyan set a fine example for everyone--both as a competitor and as a coach. With over 92 schools registered, his Hayastan MMA Academy won the overall tournament award for having bagged more points and more gold medals than any other, beating out the second place dojo by 26 points.



Neil Simon, USJF President, Olympians, Jimmy Pedro, Ronda Rousey, Jim Bregman, with Dr. AnnMaria DeMars, USJA President, Gary Goltz, USJA COO, and Robert Fukuda, USJF, Executive Director



Flash Forward - Gokor's son Arthur at the [2017 Winter Nationals®](#)

For more information go to the [Judo Winter Nationals®](#) website or E-Mail [Gary Goltz](#)